

Commissioner Lori F. Kaplan

Text as prepared for: Schools/Child care Asthma meeting

Date presented: September 18, 2002, 8:00 – 8:15 a.m.

Location: IGCS Conference Room "B"

(Text does not include verbatim comments)

Welcome

- Welcome to Indianapolis - Crossroads of America.
- Big city benefits with a small town feel.
- Full agenda, but if time, see
 - State Museum
 - NCAA headquarters and museum
 - Eiteljorg for Western Art and Native American History
 - Zoo and White River Gardens
 - Shopping - The Circle Center Mall
 - Lots of Restaurants
 - Walk around canal

□ THANK YOU to ECOS (Environmental Council of States) and ASTHO (Association of State and Territorial Health Officials) for sponsoring/organizing this meeting in order to bring environmental and health agencies together to discuss asthma, an issue that *affects one in thirteen children* nationwide.

- I would also like to thank the U.S. EPA's Office of Children's Health for the **funding** to put these meetings together.

□ Why we are here

- San Diego, CA, meeting a little over one year ago. Over 100 representatives from health and environmental agencies came together – discussed necessity for both types of agencies, health and environment, to work together to address the ever increasing incidences of asthma in our nation's children.
- Dr. Greg Wilson from the Indiana State Department of Health and I both attended this first meeting.
- The meeting was a pivotal point for both of us. It truly drove home what we were already coming to realize – that both agencies must work together to address the common goal and desire to reduce the incidences of asthma in our children.

- After the first workshop in San Diego, it was decided categories needed to be broken down to focus on 4 areas: 1) data integration, 2) indoor air environments, 3) school and child care settings, and 4) outdoor environments.

□ **Purpose of the meeting**

- This workshop, which is the third of five, will focus on environmental triggers of asthma found in **school/child care settings**.
- As I mentioned earlier, an estimated one in thirteen American students has asthma. Anywhere from 8,000 to 26,000 new cases are diagnosed in children every year.
- This is not a problem that will go away.
- This is a problem that is getting progressively worse.
- It will take decisive, aggressive steps to help curb these alarming statistics - steps we have already begun to take by actively participating in these conferences. Your work within the next two-and-a-half days will no doubt shape the way we deal with children's asthma at the state level.
- Our ultimate goal is to create an action plan for states to use as guidance for their asthma initiatives.

□ **Why focus on school and child care settings**

- It is doubly important for the state to take a leadership role for the air quality in schools and childcare facilities because it is an area that parents and the children themselves have little control over.
- If your child has asthma, you can do things to ensure your home and backyard are safe, or at least safer, for them. You can cut down the ragweed in the backyard; you can get rid of carpet, and you can keep the family pet out of the child's room.
- But parent's can't inspect the ventilation system at a school; they can't make sure dust is kept at a minimum in those buildings, and they can't require that the school building has an adequate supply of fresh air.
- That's where we come in.
 - The average age of our school buildings in the United States is **42 years**. Many of the buildings need upgrades or repairs. Many of the ventilation systems are inadequate and antiquated.

- One in five American schools has indoor air quality problems. About 8.2 million students breathe the air in those schools five days a week.
- While we have to tackle the problem in existing schools, our work doesn't stop there. We have a responsibility to ensure that new school buildings are constructed with air quality in mind.
- By the year 2007, it is estimated that 6000 new schools will be built across the nation. It's up to all of us to make sure they are healthy buildings that our students can breathe comfortably in.

□ Bragging Rights - Indiana History

- Five years ago, Indiana's Governor Frank O'Bannon asked all state agencies what they could do to help children in Indiana reach their full potential. Our answer to that question was to start a children's health initiative called "Protecting Children from Environmental Threats."
- These threats include lead, mercury, pesticides/pests and asthma irritants.
- IDEM created the position of Children's Environmental Health Coordinator. The coordinator works on issues that pound for pound affect children more than adults, such as the threats just mentioned.
- Since then we have instituted several successful programs including:
- The Lead Safe Families for 2000 Program in which we teamed up with the Indiana State Dept of Health and performed over 1,300 free lead risk assessments. To date we have trained more than 150 lead risk assessors under the program.
- We partnered with the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration to develop the Indiana Five Star Environmental Recognition Program for Child Care Facilities. Last year, IDEM won the "Innovations for State Government" award from the Council of State Governments for this project.
- Within the last four years we have had up to 75 facilities participating in the program. This program has the potential to affect the over 100,000 Hoosier Children attending an Indiana child care facility.
- As you can tell, partnerships play a very important role.
- We've partnered with the Indiana Department of Health on many of these children's health issues and are looking forward to working with them to form a new group called the Indiana Joint Commission on Asthma. I

would like to thank Dr. Wilson for his efforts on bringing our two agencies together on this initiative.

- We have also reached out to our Indiana Department of Education on a new project called "Environmental Management System in Schools" involving managing environmental threats in schools.

- **Closing**

- I want to thank all of you for all the work that you do in your states.
- Your discussions during this meeting for the action agenda will have long term benefits in reducing asthma triggers in children.
- I look forward to seeing the final product that you create as a result of this meeting.

- **Introduce Dr. Wilson**

- It is my great pleasure and honor to introduce Dr. Greg Wilson from the Indiana State Department of Health.
- Dr. Wilson has been a great partner in all of our children's health initiatives.
- Most of his career has centered on children's health and safety issues.
- A 1975 graduate from IU's Medical School, Dr. Wilson is a developmental pediatrician who has been a pediatrics professor at the I.U. Medical Center for most of his career.
- He founded the Indiana Poison Center and served as director from 1979-1983.
- Prior to his appointment to ISDH in February 2001 by Governor Frank O'Bannon, he served as a faculty member at Riley Hospital for Children as well as director of the Pediatric Intensive Case Management Program at Wishard Hospital
- His community service has included involvement with child passenger restraint legislation, Healthy Babies, First Steps committees, Fetal and Infant Mortality Review, Medicaid advisory committees, and programs for children with disabilities.
- So, please join me in welcoming Indiana's State Health Commissioner, Dr. Gregory Wilson...

